

25 July 2003



# The Consular Communiqué

## Non-Immigrant Visa Procedural Changes

### Inside this issue:

Business Visa Program	2
Lost or Expired Green Cards	3
Sponsoring a Colombian fiancé/e	3
U.S.—Colombian Training Efforts	4
Checking U.S. Passport Dates	4
AMCITS: Register with US	5
Consular Contact	5
Consular Participation in Colombian Rotary Club	6
Travel Update on Colombia	6

The Department of State has instituted several additional changes to non-immigrant visa (NIV) procedures worldwide, effective August 1, 2003. These changes reduce the number of NIV applicants who may be issued visas without an interview and in Colombia will affect our Revalidation Program and the Business, Airline, and Groups Programs.

**Revalidation Program:** People with multiple-entry, full-validity non-immigrant visas that have expired within the last 12 months may continue to apply for another NIV without an interview. (Previously, individuals whose NIVs had expired within the last two years were eligible to use the Revalidation Program.) The type of NIV that may be renewed through the Revalidation Program will expand from only the B1/B2 (business and tourism) visa to include holders of multiple-entry, full-validity F (student), J (exchange visitor), and M (technical student) visas. We will not revalidate visas with more than six months validity remaining. Applications for the Revalidation Program are submitted at Windows A, B, C, or D in the visa patio, Monday through Friday, 13:00 – 14:30.



**Business and Airline Programs:** Members of these programs, who are applying for a visa for the first time, will now need an interview. However, first-time applicants will retain the advantages of priority treatment, will not have to make appointments through the Call Center, and will be seen by the Business Visa Program Officer on Fridays, as arranged between him/her and the company.

Businesses must submit requests for interviews at least 20 working days in advance (except for emergencies), and the Business Visa Program Officer will then schedule the appointments. These requests must be submitted by email to: [BusinessBogota@state.gov](mailto:BusinessBogota@state.gov) and must include the name of the company in the subject line of the email. Applicants who have been previously refused visas must make appointments through the Call Center. Please see Page 2 for further information on the Business Visa Program.



## Attention All U.S. Citizens Resident in Colombia!

The American Citizen Services Registration Drive is in full swing! If you have not registered with us since **August 1, 2002, NOW** is the time to do so.



Please see Page 5 for details.

Remember, giving us this information now makes it easier to assist you later.

**Group Visa Program:** This service is for recognized national or international organizations with groups of 15 – 150 persons who have similar travel plans. We will continue to offer a Group Visa Program. However, effective August 1, 2003, all groups will now require a personal interview to evaluate their cases and travel plans. The organization can request an expedited appointment via email ([NIVBogota@state.gov](mailto:NIVBogota@state.gov)), addressed to the attention of the Group Visa Program Officer. The request must include the applicants' full names, dates of birth, passport numbers, cedula identification numbers, ages, and the role, position, etc. of each group member. All organizations must submit their requests for interviews at least 45 working days in advance (except for emergencies). If the request is approved, the Group Visa Program Officer will fax the organization instructions on how to contact the Call Center to schedule an expedited group appointment. All appointments will be with the Group Visa Program Officer on Fridays, as arranged between the organization and the Call Center.



# Non-Immigrant Visa Unit

## Business Visas 101

### I. Who Can Join the Business Visa Program?

- A. U.S., Colombian, multinational, or third country businesses may apply.

### II. What Are the Requirements?

- A. On-going, substantial business activity with the United States.
- B. A minimum of 50 full-time employees based in Colombia or a recommendation for entry into the program by CEA (Consejo de Empresas Americanas), the Colombian American Chamber of Commerce, or a recognized trade or industry association.
- C. A background check by the Embassy.

### III. When Can Companies Apply?

- A. Deadlines are April 30, August 31, and December 31. The company will be notified in writing of our decision.

### IV. What Documents Are Needed?

- A. A letter expressing interest in the program. Each company must also submit a letter with the electronic signatures of a total of four officers responsible for travel arrangements (see below).
- B. A copy of the Chamber of Commerce registry with a list of the *dates and places of birth of each person whose name appears on the registry* (whether Colombian or foreign, including auditors).
- C. Information about the total number of company employees and the number of employees that normally travel to the United States for training or business each year. Also list the names and positions of each executive in the company.
- D. Optional: A letter of recommendation from CEA, the Colombian American Chamber of Commerce, or a recognized trade or industry association. If the company has fewer than 50 full-time employees, a letter from one of these organizations is required.



### V. What Is An Electronic Signature?

- A. For the purposes of the Business Visa Program, an electronic signature is an e-mail account controlled and accessed by only one person (this does not include the system administrator, who also has access to the e-mail account).
- B. Each company must submit a letter with the electronic signatures of a total of four officers (two principal officers and two alternate officers), responsible for arranging business travel on behalf of the company (referred to as “responsible officers”). Each officer must also sign the letter by hand.

- C. **Companies who are already members of the Program must have four electronic signatures on file with the Embassy by August 1, 2003. These can**

**be sent to the Embassy (at Window 16). Each officer must also sign the letter by hand.**

### VI. Requesting an Appointment Once Becoming a Member

- A. A responsible officer from the company may request an appointment for any employee (who has not been refused a visa in the past) traveling on company business by sending such request to our e-mail address at [BusinessBogota@state.gov](mailto:BusinessBogota@state.gov) (for business visa-related inquiries only). Please include the company name in the subject line.
- B. The electronic signature of the responsible officer must correspond to that provided by the company.
- C. We require **20 business days** to schedule an appointment. Emergency requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- D. Requests must include the following information:
- **NAMES** of applicants requesting visas
  - **PURPOSE** of travel and intended destination
  - **DATES** of intended travel

### VII. Confirmation of Appointment

- A. The responsible officer for the company will receive confirmation of the appointment from [BusinessBogota@state.gov](mailto:BusinessBogota@state.gov). All interviews will be conducted on Fridays, as arranged with the company.

### VIII. Visa Interview Fee

- A. After receiving the appointment confirmation, the employee must go to Banco Union to pay the US \$100 interview fee and receive a bar code sticker.
- B. Each branch office of Banco Union has a list of companies participating in the program.
- C. The bar code sticker will include all the personal information required for tourist visas, with the exception of the date of appointment.

### IX. Interview

- A. Applicants must arrive by 8:00 a.m. on the Friday of their appointment. They will turn in their passports, applications, and job letter (which will include the written and electronic signatures of two responsible officers) at Window 16. These are the only documents required. They will then be called for an interview.
- B. For **emergency cases only**, if the visa application is accepted for processing, the visa will be printed and the passport returned at 14:00 on the same day. Otherwise, passports will be returned by pre-paid courier.

### X. Other

- A. Applicants over 60 years of age do not require an interview. They may deliver their applications by courier any day of the week between 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. at Window 16. Applications will be adjudicated and returned by pre-paid courier.

## What to Do About Lost or Expired “Green Cards”

Visa Unit within a few days and cannot be mailed. In some instances the Consular Officer will have to verify the applicant's current residence status through the Bureau of Citizen and Immigration Services (BCIS), which may take several days. Should this be necessary, the Immigrant Visa Unit will provide the applicant with a card that allows him/her to return to the Embassy once he/she has been contacted and told to do so. If an applicant receives a transportation letter and returns to the U.S., he/she must remember to renew the resident card through an immigration office in the U.S., or else he/she could be in jeopardy of losing resident status.

**PERMANENT RESIDENT CARD**

NAME: UNCLE SAM



INS A# \_\_\_\_\_  
Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ Category P26 Sex M  
Country of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
**CARD EXPIRES** \_\_\_\_\_  
Resident Since \_\_\_\_\_



C1USA0223456791EAC9730050225<<  
4910040M9411014CAN<<<<<<<<<<<8  
<<<<<<<<<<<<<

- Applicants should be aware that their resident status will expire if they spend more than one (1) year out of the U.S. without prior approval from BCIS, whether the green card expiration date is still valid or not. They will not be able to use the green card to return to the U.S. as they will have lost their residency status, and will have to begin the entire immigra-

Please be aware that we believe there is a certain amount of fraud in these applications, with some residents selling their cards and then claiming the card was lost or stolen. We may have to conduct an investigation into an application if we believe that there is fraud involved.

Consult our web page at <http://usembassy.state.gov/colombia> or call the Immigrant Visa Unit between 15:00—16:00 on Tuesdays for more information.

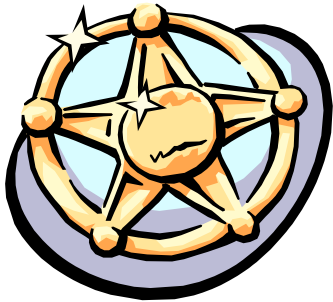
U.S. citizens may sponsor foreigners as fiancés for immigration to the United States. The first step is for the U.S. citizen to file a petition with the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) in the United States. (These petitions may not be filed with the Embassy overseas but only in the United States.)

Upon receipt of the approved petition, the Embassy will contact the fiancé/e and send him/her the required forms and information. Generally, we are able to issue the K visa within one month of receipt of the petition. After entering the United States with a K visa, the U.S. citizen and fiancé/e must marry within 90 days.

Check the website for more information: <http://usembassy.state.gov/colombia>.

# Fraud prevention unit

## Training Efforts Enhance U.S. Border Security



The Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) provides training in detecting false travel documentation for Colombian airport, airport police and Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (DAS) personnel on a twice-yearly basis. FPU keeps in close contact with these agencies and also supplies a variety

of equipment for use in helping to detect fraudulent travel – before the travel begins. We have a very good working relationship with all three agencies and appreciate tremendously the support and cooperation they supply to the FPU.

During the training sessions, which are either conducted by our own FPU staff or by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) personnel from the regional Panama Office, the following items are covered:

- Latest updates on BCIS documents, rules and regulations
- Most recent trends in fraud

### ➤ Importance of interviewing techniques

Besides the Embassy's training sessions, BCIS has specific on-going programs which provide staffing and equipment for long-term training and detection. For example, during November 2002 to February 2003, BCIS Panama conducted the second phase of the Immigration Control Officer (ICO) Program in Bogotá. Two border patrol agents and one senior immigration inspector, working side-by-side with Colombian officials, intercepted more than 200 mala fide travelers and trained more than 700 personnel from different Colombian airports and DAS agencies in the techniques of fraudulent document and imposter detection.

As a part of their program, BCIS Panama and Embassy Bogotá hosted a specialized "Workshop Against Organized Crime," focusing on alien smuggling, terrorism and narco-trafficking. Among other agencies participating in this specialized workshop were the U.S. Customs, FBI and DEA, along with members of the Colombian Cuerpo Técnico de Investigación (CTI), the Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (DAS), the Policía Aeroportuaria and the Fiscalía de la Nación. Security personnel from Alianza Summa airlines also participated.

# American citizen services Unit

## To All Americans Resident in Colombia: Check Your Passport's Expiration Date

If you are an American citizen residing in Colombia, you should check your passport's expiration date before making travel plans. This should be done early enough in your planning to allow yourself enough time to get a new passport if necessary.

Since April 2002, all of our Embassies and Consulates around the world send passport applications to the National Passport Center (NPC) in New Hampshire for processing. Only the NPC and other passport agencies in the United States have the technology to produce the new, photo-digitized passports that include enhanced anti-forgery elements.

Overseas posts can only provide short-term emergency passports which lack these advanced features. We are authorized to issue such passports only in the case of a true emergency. If an emer-

gency passport is issued, often times the traveler later has to pay a second fee to obtain a full validity passport.



Processing time for passport issuance is approximately two weeks from the date of application to the day the passport is ready to pick up at the Embassy in Bogotá. American citizens can pick up their passports in person, or the Embassy can mail it to them via the commercial messenger service. This service may add an additional week to the time of passport receipt.

Americans who must renew their passports at the Embassy should therefore do so at least several weeks in advance of their next planned trip. If they wish, they may apply as early as six months before their current passport expires. Check our website for specific application requirements (<http://usembassy.state.gov/colombia>).



## U.S. citizen registration drive

It has been several years since we last updated our database of American citizens in Colombia who have registered with the Embassy. With the passage of time, this database becomes increasingly inaccurate, as registered Americans depart Colombia without informing us, and other Americans arrive without registering. In order to serve the American community in Colombia as efficiently as possible, we are requesting that all American citizens in Colombia, who have not registered with the American Citizen Services Unit since August 1, 2002, please do so at this time. Registrations submitted prior to that date will be purged from the database in the coming weeks.

The best way to register with us is to obtain and complete a registration form and a Privacy Act waiver form, and then mail, fax or bring them to the American Citizen Services Unit. We have these forms on hand in the unit, and they may be picked up during normal service hours, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. When submitting these documents please also provide a photocopy of the identification page of your U.S. passport, as well as those of any American citizen family members residing with you in Colombia, as evidence of U.S. citizenship.

Blank forms may also be obtained at our website, <http://usembassy.state.gov/colombia>. Follow the links to "Consular", "ACS" and "Registration Services". The forms may be completed and submitted electronically at the website, but as this method does not permit submission of proof of citizenship, it is preferable to print out the forms, complete them by hand and submit them by mail, fax or in person, along with photocopies of your passport ID page and those of any family members.

Our fax number in Bogotá is 1-315-2196 (within Colombia). Our mailing address is:

Servicios para Ciudadanos Norteamericanos  
Embajada de los Estados Unidos  
Calle 22D Bis, No. 47-51  
Bogotá



American citizens on temporary visits to Colombia are also encouraged to register with the Embassy. For all registrants, it is important to include on the form, in the space provided, your estimated date of departure from Colombia.

Thank you for taking the time to register with the Embassy. By doing so you make it easier for us to assist you in the future.

## How to Contact the Consular Section

All visa, fraud and ACS information can be accessed on our web page at <http://usembassy.state.gov/colombia>.

**Non-immigrant** visa information is available on this website and includes information about visas, supporting documents, how to schedule an appointment, stolen/lost passports, and required forms.

If users need additional general information or to schedule an appointment, they may call the call center (Visa Information Call Center). They do this by obtaining a PIN code at any Colpatria bank, and then calling the call center at 01-8000-12-32-32. People requesting early appointments should call the call center as well. Callers from the United States may dial 1-800-368-0360. A credit card access fee for the US-based number will be charged. The Call Center does not provide case specific information.

Applicants themselves with a question about a specific case, including a visa denial, may fax their query to 571-315-2127 or email [NIVBogota@state.gov](mailto:NIVBogota@state.gov). Visa appeal review takes approximately three weeks. We do not accept any documents prior to an interview, nor can we accept third party inquiries. U.S. Congressional interests only should send in-



quiries to [ConsularBogota@state.gov](mailto:ConsularBogota@state.gov).

Information regarding **immigrant visas** can be obtained by phone at 571-315-1566 between 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. on Tuesdays. Priority dates for all immigrant visas are listed at [http://travel.state.gov/visa\\_bulletin.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa_bulletin.html). The e-mail address is [IVBogota@state.gov](mailto:IVBogota@state.gov).

Our **Fraud Prevention Unit** can be reached by telephone at 571-315-2497. No visa questions will be answered at this number.

**American Citizens Services** questions should be e-mailed to [acs\\_bogota@state.gov](mailto:acs_bogota@state.gov). No visa questions will be answered at this address. All information regarding passports and consular certification of birth can be found on our web site at <http://usembassy.state.gov/colombia/> and ACS/Visas. Travel advisories published by the U.S. Department of State can be found at <http://travel.state.gov/crisis1.html>.

The **Barranquilla Consular Agency** can be reached from inside Colombia at 095-353-1130, by fax at 095-353-5216 or by e-mail at [conagent@metrotel.net.co](mailto:conagent@metrotel.net.co).

## Community News: Consular Officers Support Colombian Rotary Club



Consular Officers, as well as other Embassy officials, recently attended the Rotary Club of Bogotá's change of mandate meeting (the Rotary calendar year starts in June). The Rotary Club of Bogotá is the "deacon" club of Colombia, as the founding club having celebrated over 75 years of service in Colombia. Two Embassy officials were already active members, while two more were inducted at this mandate meeting. The officers participate in the International Service Avenue, which seeks to strengthen ties with clubs in their local communities, such as Detroit and Houston. Most recently, the Rotary Club of Bogotá agreed to assist a group of Foreign Service Officers in donating US \$1000 in clothing and equipment to a local foundation (La Fundación IDAFE) for disadvantaged children.

## Travel Update on Coming to Colombia

This Travel Warning was issued on June 16, 2003 to alert American citizens to ongoing security concerns in Colombia and continues to warn against travel to Colombia, but notes the reduced level of security incidents in Cartagena and on San Andres Island. This supersedes the Travel Warning issued on February 24, 2003.

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against travel to Colombia. Terrorist and criminal violence by narcotraffickers, guerrillas, illegal self-defense (paramilitary) groups and other criminal elements continues to affect all parts of the country, urban and rural. Citizens of the United States and other countries continue to be the victims of threats, kidnappings, domestic airline hijackings and murders. Threats targeting official and long-term residence Americans are expected to continue and possibly increase in response to U.S. support for Colombian drug eradication programs. Colombian groups have been known to operate in the border areas of neighboring countries, creating similar dangers for travelers in those areas. Bombings have occurred throughout Colombia, including a steady recent rise in attacks on civilian targets in urban areas. This trend shows no sign of abating in the near future, and some foreign interests have been among the targets. There have been significantly fewer security incidents in the tourist area in the colonial, walled part of Cartagena and none, to our



knowledge, on San Andres Island (off the coast of Nicaragua).

About 3,000 kidnapping incidents were reported throughout Colombia in 2002. There is a greater risk of being kidnapped in Colombia than in any other country in the world. In the past three years, 26 Americans were reported kidnapped in various parts of the country. American kidnap or murder victims have included journalists, missionaries, scientists, human rights workers, U.S. government employees and businesspeople, as well as persons on tourism or family visits, and even small children. No one can be considered immune on the basis of occupation, nationality or any other factor. Most kidnappings of U.S. citizens in Colombia have been committed by guerrilla groups, including

the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), which were both initially designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations by the Secretary of State in 1997 and re-designated as such in October 2001. Since it is U.S. policy not to make concessions to, nor to strike deals with, terrorists, the U.S. Government's ability to assist kidnapped U.S. citizens is limited.

For further information on travel to Colombia, consult the Department's Consular Information Sheet for Colombia and the Worldwide Caution Public Announcement at <http://travel.state.gov>.